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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2004

THIS REPORT WILL PRESENT A TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER
THREE THEMES:

HEADLINES
BRIEFING
EDITORIAL OPINION

HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

UN has no 'B-plan' for Cyprus - Alvaro de Soto - Hurriyet
Greek Cypriots may move to invalidate the Annan Plan -
Denktas - Milliyet
Cyprus peace process irreversible now - M. A. Talat -
Milliyet
Turkey's hand now stronger on Cyprus - PM Erdogan - Turkiye
Turkey striving for an honorable solution on Cyprus -
Turkiye
EU can't discard Turkey - Verheugen - Sabah
Sweden's PM promises to support Turkey for EU accession -
Sabah

OPINION MAKERS

EU, UN against EU participation in Cyprus talks - Zaman
Greece, Turkey need to form a common future - Papandreou -
Yeni Safak
Papandreou will turn to Aegean once Cyprus is resolved -
Cumhuriyet
De Soto in Cyprus after 11 months - Yeni Safak
Turkish troop reduction in Cyprus a thorny issue -
Cumhuriyet
Shiites angry with Bremer for rejecting Islamic constitution
for Iraq - Yeni Safak
Sezer, Khatami agree on Iraq's unity - Cumhuriyet
Security fence harmful for thousands of Palestinians - Zaman
Putin behind the killing of Yandarbiev - Yeni Safak

BRIEFING

Cyprus: Turkish Cypriot leader Denktas has reiterated the need for a bi-zonal structure on the island with equal sovereignty rights for the two sides. The Annan plan is not acceptable in its current form, Denktas said, and added that he might not sign the plan even if it is accepted in the referendum. Turkish Cypriot 'Prime Minister' Mehmet Ali Talat said that the peace process in Cyprus could not be reversed. Denktas' withdrawal from the talks is unlikely, Talat believes. After meeting with EU's Verheugen in Brussels on Tuesday, UN special Cyprus envoy Alvaro de Soto acknowledged that the UN had no 'B-plan' in hand if the Annan plan is rejected in the referenda to be held on April 21 in Cyprus. De Soto warned Ankara that a rejection of the Annan plan would mean 'tragedy.' Verheugen said that the EU would not participate in the talks, but would provide technical help, say papers. De Soto will proceed to Cyprus on Wednesday, and will outline a timetable for negotiations after meeting with the Cypriot leaders.

Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan voiced hope at his party group meeting on Tuesday that a solution in Cyprus was near. The Turkish position in Cyprus had never been so strong, Erdogan said. Greece's ruling party PASOK's new leader Papandreou said on a visit to south Cyprus on Tuesday that a solution to the Cyprus problem would positively affect Turkish-Greek relations. 'United Cyprus and Greece will work hand in hand for Turkey's EU accession,' Papandreou reportedly said.

President Sezer visits Tehran: President Sezer was given a

warm welcome by his Iranian counterpart Khatami at the D-8 summit meeting in Tehran on Tuesday, papers report. Khatami has assured Sezer regarding Turkey's security, but declined to label the PKK/KADEK as a terrorist organization, papers note.

EU issues encouraging messages for Ankara: EU's enlargement chief Verheugen said on the eve of UN-sponsored peace negotiations for Cyprus that the European family would issue encouraging messages for Ankara at the upcoming EU summits in March and June if progress is seen in Cyprus talks, say papers. Dailies expect German Chancellor Schroeder to urge Ankara to speed up EU reforms on his official visit to Turkey February 22-24.

Turkey's FM with Georgian counterpart: Turkey's Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul discussed ways for furthering cooperation between Turkey and Georgia at a meeting in Ankara on Tuesday. At the first official contact between the two governments after the 'velvet revolution' in Georgia, the two ministers have discussed reviving mutual trade and investment, and building an oil pipeline co-extensive to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) route. Georgia's Foreign Minister Tedo Japaridze said that Georgia and Russia would form a joint working group for the new oil transport route, and announced that Turkish companies could join the project.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Iraq/US Foreign Policy; EU-Turkey

"What is America Doing?"

Yilmaz Oztuna wrote in the conservative-mass appeal Turkiye (2/18): "One should not think that the US changed its radical policy over Syria and Iran. Otherwise, the foreign policy would be directed wrongly. The US plan, to have compliant regimes in the great geography which they call 'the Greater Middle East', is valid. The commotion they faced in Afghanistan and Iraq was confusing for the US because it did not have adequate information on this geography. After the presidential elections in November, during winter 2004-2005, they will act on this hot topic. The US believes that the biggest obstacle and the biggest enemy against the Pax-Americana is international, especially Middle-East originated terrorism, and they will do anything to counter the terrorism. Washington might show Turkey as a model, moreover, might want to use Turkish military power, just to improve (!) the relevant region. They expect friendly behavior from Ankara. It is not possible to show a state as an example if anti-American feelings exist."

"A Date is What We Deserve"

Ilnur Celik commented in the Turkish Daily News (2/18): "Turkey deserves to start accession talks with the EU today. No one is doing us a great favor by giving us a date or even starting the accession talks because everyone knows this does not mean full membership is a foregone conclusion. Look at the examples of Greece, Portugal and Spain. None of them had viable democracies when they were allowed into the European Economic Community and yet the EU countries tolerated this situation to bring more democracy to the Mediterranean region. So why not help Turkey? The performance of the ruling AKP government to enhance the democratic structure in Turkey, fight corruption and irregularities and revamp the economy shows the country is on the right course to becoming a member of the family of civilized nations. Turkey's democrats need encouragement to fight on. The government needs encouragement to display courage and resolve as it did on Cyprus in all other matters and thus ease the military out of our political system. Getting a date for the start of accession talks will definitely do the trick."

EDELMAN